

**West Mojave Plan
Task Group 2
Green Tree Inn, Victorville
August 30, 2001**

Attendees

Task Group: Mike Ahrens, Craig Anderson, Jim Anderson, Laura Anderson, Drew Ashley, Jim Atkins, Thomas Bell, Ray Bransfield, Steve Brookens, Mike Connor, Paul Little Coyote, Bob Cross, Lousene Cross, Nick Dallavalle, Jeri Ferguson, Ken Foster, Jennifer Foster, Gail Fry, Joan Kahn, Peter Kiriakos, Steve Kuehl, Gerry Hillier, Don Johnson, Harold Johnson, Joni Lundgren, Jacki Morgan, Will Moring, Chuck Mueller, Lorelei Oviatt, Doug Parham, Eddie Phillips, MaryAnne Phillips, Bill Postmus, Darrell Readmond, Tim Salt, Ron Schiller, Robert W. Smith, Suzi Smith, Deborah Stevens, Mike Sturdy, Tracy Walters, Chuck Williams.

West Mojave Team: Marcia Carrillo, Joe Gautsch, Bill Haigh, Larry LaPre, Tom Peters, Valery Pilmer, Les Weeks.

Introductions

Bill Haigh opened the meeting at 6:30 P.M., and introductions were made. Bill indicated he would like to discuss field check results, the proposed field survey, and project schedule. He noted that the Bureau of Land Management's Desert District Manager, Tim Salt, was present, and that he would like to allow time at the end of the meeting for attendees to pose questions to Salt regarding miscellaneous BLM issues.

Haigh indicated that many user group comments have been received, and that staff is responding to those comments by rethinking the approach to route designation.

Schedule

Haigh referenced the "West Mojave Plan Timeline and Vehicle Access Network Field Review Schedule." He noted that all dates on the schedule are pegged to the congressionally established deadline for completing the West Mojave Plan in concert with work on the Fort Irwin expansion-that date being June 2003. In order to meet this date, the draft EIS must be ready for distribution by July 2002. That means all other work, including the development of a proposed motorized vehicle access network, must be completed by the first part of next year in order to allow sufficient time to complete the West Mojave Plan document and EIS/EIR.

Haigh said that many comments and concerns have been received from the public regarding the accuracy of the route mapping and the quality of the rationale offered to support proposed route openings and closures. He said that he asked the members of the West Mojave planning team

having responsibility for outdoor recreation issues (consultant CH2MHill) to put together a proposal for ground-truthing the route network and gathering field data which will allow the team to address these issues while meeting required time frames.

Survey Proposal

A proposal for ground truthing the route network and gathering additional data has been developed. Les Weeks, subconsultant with CH2MHill, was asked to explain it. Weeks indicated that the public comments on the suggested route networks released to date were the starting point for the proposal, and were taken into consideration during its development. Many of those comments focused on the accuracy of the route network (which had been developed through air photo interpretation alone, rather than employing a ground survey), the quality of the available recreation data, and the need for a more complete discussion of the reasons underlying proposed route openings and closures.

Les Weeks outlined the approach and assumptions for the field surveys as follows:

- Ten 2-man teams will be assigned
- It is assumed that each team will cover approximately 30 miles a day
- Surveys will take place over eight 3-day weekends.
- Each team will consist of a driver (experienced in desert travel) and a data collector (trained in planning, geography or other technical area).
- Objectivity will be maintained by using checklists, data collection professionals in the field, and training (classroom and on-the-ground calibration field training).
- Day 1 in a new area will consist of travel by a core team of four wheel drive vehicles along the main (primary) routes. Small spur trails will be noted, and the size and condition of routes will be recorded. Maps will be created that night for the 2nd day's work. On Days 2 and 3, motorcycle teams will map secondary and tertiary routes while four wheel drivers continue to map primary routes.
- Additional recreational data (where people go and what they do) will be collected.
- GIS technology will be used to ensure that information collected during the survey is applied to the decision making process for the route network.

Les said that he would like to work with the Task Group to establish a list of attributes that can be used by the survey teams to guide their collection of additional data on the route network.

The proposal was developed so that it could be completed within the timelines set for completion of the West Mojave Plan. Therefore, the focus of the effort will be on the twelve (of twenty-one) most critical subregions which contain approximately 80% of the route mileage identified by the Denver air photo interpreters.

Bill Haigh indicated that the Steering Committee met earlier in the day to discuss the proposal and made the following recommendations:

- 1) Proceed with the on-the-ground survey proposal.

- 2) Ensure that the Ord Subregion and other previously designated areas are consistent with the routes designated through the West Mojave Planning process.
- 3) Review the discreet types of information (attributes) to be collected with Task Group 2 prior to implementation.
- 4) Appoint a Survey Advisory Group to work with the survey team and be a liaison back to stakeholder groups. The advisory group should be a small subcommittee or group formed out of Task Group 2 and should be representative of the various interest groups. It was noted that this group could also go over maps prior to the field survey to note areas of importance to the interest groups.

Public participation in the process was discussed. Haigh indicated that updates on the status of the field surveys will be made available on the West Mojave Team website, and informational meetings may be held in various areas.

The following comments were made during the discussion of this item:

- **Will this effort revisit areas for which route designation has already been completed?**
Haigh responded that there is no intent to redo what has already been done. The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) 1980 California Desert Conservation Area Plan required the establishment of a motorized vehicle access network on about 1.5 million acres of public lands in the West Mojave. Since 1980, route designation has occurred on about 15 percent of these lands. The focus of the present effort is the remaining 85 percent. Some individuals expressed concern, and indicated that they were dissatisfied with route designations done for certain areas since 1980 (e.g. the Rand Mountains, Afton Canyon).
- **The purpose and need for route designation may vary from subregion to subregion (i.e. some within DWMA, and some not). How can the process be consistent if the needs are different?**
Haigh indicated that the intent is to keep the methodology consistent, and to apply it to each geographic area on a site-specific basis. The weighting system established for the model should be flexible enough to take care of this issue.
- **Is there a set number of open routes per square mile that is being recommended?**
Haigh responded no.
- **Several suggestions were made for involving the public.**
These suggestions included getting information to the newspapers to get the word out; printing a form in the local newspapers that public members could use to provide input on the areas surveyed; adding a button to the website that enables the public to provide suggestions; and using a Thomas Brother type reference grid on the maps.

- **Suggestions were made regarding other sources of mapped information that could be useful.**
These suggestions included using the Automobile Club as a background resource. Ron Schiller volunteered to share map information he has collected over the years. Some suggested that old USGS maps and other historical maps would be useful. Joe Gautsch will check into whether 15 ½ minute maps in digital form are available from Southern California Edison.
- **Can mapped information be placed on the website?**
Joe Gautsch indicated that PDF-format maps could be put up on the website.
- **What will happen with those subregions already released for comment?**
Bill Haigh responded that the comments received to date will provide a starting point for the field survey and modeling. These regions will be field surveyed using the same methodology as any other subregion, however — there will be no difference in approach between any of the subregions.
- **What will happen to the remaining subregions not included in the proposed 12 to be field surveyed?**
Bill Haigh indicated that the remaining subregions will be part of a phase 2. The Steering Committee recommended that these also be completed as part of the West Mojave Planning process. Staff will be developing a recommendation on how to accomplish this.

The Task Group indicated that it concurred with the Steering Committee recommendations that Task Group 2 work on the field attributes, and that Task Group 2 appoint a survey Advisory Group.

The Survey Advisory Group was appointed as follows:

Ron Schiller	Northern Mojave Desert interests
Carol Landry	Equestrian interests
Eddie Phillips	AAFA
Jeri Ferguson	Off highway vehicle interests
(To be determined)	Environmental interests
Bob Smith	Local government interests
Paul Little Coyote	Native American & mining interests

Les Weeks listed the following attributes as a starting point for discussion:

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|---|-------------|
| • Area to area connector (subregion to subregion) | • Primary |
| • California back country discovery trail | • Secondary |
| • Desert Access Guide (DAG) route | • Tertiary |
| | • USGS |
| | • Mine |

- Photo access
- RV access
- Mineral rich area
- Private property access
- Ranch access
- Mine access
- Dead end
- Loop
- Historic interest
- Single track
- Technical 4-wheel drive
- Technical motorcycle
- Campground
- Historic site
- Hunting area
- Rockhound area
- Trailhead
- Viewpoint
- Water feature (guzzler/spring)
- Equestrian staging area
- Wilderness access
- Wilderness corridor route
- Wildflower display
- Education area
- Points of Interest

The following suggestions were made to add to the above:

- Area of natural quiet
- Pristine area
- Dark sky sites
- Semi-primitive (Ron Schiller suggested checking with Jim Jennings in Bishop BLM)
- Riparian areas (needs to be defined)
- Route in wash
- Unique or outstanding vegetation areas
- Erosive soil
- Rock climbing
- Disability consideration
- Wildlife viewing area
- Animal crossings (wildlife corridors)

Next Meeting

The next meeting date was scheduled for Wednesday, October 3rd from 6:00 to 9:00 PM at the Green Tree Inn in Victorville.

At the end of the meeting Doug Parham stated that he felt the group needs additional information as follows:

- What kind of roads are needed?
- What types of vehicles will be traveling the roads?
- How many kinds of each vehicles come out into these areas?
- Where are vehicles coming from?
- Is the number of vehicles growing or tapering off? Are we planning for the future?
- How do vehicles affect businesses?

Bill Haigh responded that a white paper will be prepared on some of these issues.

Another individual asked that information regarding carrying capacity be provided.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

After Meeting Discussion

Bill Haigh opened an after meeting discussion.

Bob Smith stated that 1st District Supervisor Bill Postmus was present at the beginning of the meeting. He indicated that the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors would be looking at the RS2477 issue during the first part of September.

An individual expressed concern about the road to Surprise Tank, within the Newberry/Rodman Subregion. The only access into the area passes through wilderness. He indicated he has been unable to get answers on how this will be handled. Tim Salt responded that wilderness was established by Congress and would supercede RS2477 claims for this road. He would need to check into this further (case law, etc.).

An individual noted that he has been trying to locate a BLM report on a soils analysis of OHV recreation. He would like a copy and would like a copy provided to the West Mojave Team. He provided written information to Tim Salt in this regard.

Paul Little Coyote expressed concern that closure of roads to sacred Native American sites makes it difficult for Native Americans to pursue their religious practices.

A question was asked regarding how navigable washes will be handled. Tim Salt replied that language in the CDCA Plan is subject to interpretation. He indicated that washes should be designated to eliminate the grey area. Lorelei Oviatt indicated that the Recreation Subcommittee

from Task Group 1 dealt with this issue.

Eddie Phillips commented that population increases and road closures lead to more damage in recreation areas.

In response to a question, Harold Johnson stated that the West Mojave Plan will be an amendment to the CDCA Plan.